



Gulf of Mexico Program Director's Report

Oct/Nov/Dec 2002

Gulf Guardian Award Winners Honored

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Eighteen Gulf Guardian Award winners from all five Gulf States were recognized at the Clean Gulf 2002 Conference held in Galveston, Texas, Nov. 5-7. The winners are:

Business Category

1st: BP America, Inc., Gulf of Mexico Business Units for a suite of environmental programs.
2nd: Outback Steakhouse in Gulfport, Miss. for "Feeding Stomachs to Influence Minds."
3rd: BASF Corporation for their Nitric Acid Recovery Project.

Youth/Education Category

1st: The Project CATE Foundation for Ribbit's Big Splash.
2nd: Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary for Down Under, Out Yonder Education Workshop.
3rd: ChevronTexaco, Pascagoula Refinery for the Mississippi Envirothon.

Government Category

1st: City of Baytown, Texas for an environmental enhancement program.
2nd: Greater Lafourche Port Commission for the Bayou Lafourche Beautification Project.
3rd: The Forever Wild Program in Montgomery, Ala.

Civic/Nonprofit Category

1st: FISH for the FISH Preserve in Cortez, Fla.
2nd: The volunteers of the Florida Bay Watch Program.
3rd: Clearwater Marine Aquarium for Magnificent Mangroves.

Individual Category

1st: Dr. Sharon Walker of the J.L. Scott Marine Education Center & Aquarium, Biloxi, Miss.
2nd: Eddie Seidensticker for the Wetland and Oyster Reef Restoration at Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge in Webster, Texas.
3rd: Jayne Buttross for the Mississippi CIAP Process.

Partnership Category

1st: The Florida Aquarium for Fantasy Island.
2nd: Mobile Area Water and Sewer Service for the Gopher Tortoise Conservation Bank.
3rd: Mississippi State University for an experimental beach landscape in Biloxi, Miss.

According to EPA Administrator Christine Whitman, the Gulf Guardian Awards took on special significance in 2002 as we celebrated 30 years since the passage of the Clean Water Act.

"The efforts of those recognized as Gulf Guardians are key to our success as we address water issues. These award winners accepted the challenge and have joined us as we restore and protect our nation's waters for future generations."

"Three years ago the Gulf of Mexico Program developed the Gulf Guardian awards as a method of recognizing and honoring the businesses, community groups, individuals, and agencies that are taking positive steps to keep the Gulf healthy, beautiful and productive," said Bryon Griffith, deputy director of the Gulf of Mexico Program.

"These award winners today exemplify the exceptional level of quality of effort being undertaken cooperatively by the public and private sectors to address critical issues that face Gulf coastal communities," he added.

Applications for the 2003 Gulf Guardian Awards are now available on-line (see block on page 7 for more details).

When the Water Runs Dry

"Scientists attending When the Water Runs Dry said the wars will stem from population growth and who has control of the water."



Futuristic water wars were the topic of discussion at a recent conference in New Orleans co-sponsored by the Gulf of Mexico Program.

Scientists attending *When the Water Runs Dry* said the wars will stem from population growth and who has control of the water. Louisiana now requires new water wells to be licensed and Tampa has the largest

desalination plant in the nation currently under construction.

U.S. EPA Regional Administrator Jimmy Palmer suggested states begin to change their laws and regulations dealing with water to: 1) clarify that surface and ground water belong to the state and are subject to regulation; 2) require permits for water withdrawals; 3) recognize

that individual water sources have multiple users; 4) allow cutoffs of water supplies when the source is endangered; 5) ensure wildlife needs are recognized; and 6) require that water withdrawals not hurt stream water quality.

Scientists emphasized that water quality and quantity affect the public and the life cycle of dozens of species of fish.

2002 Vibrio Vulnificus Shellfish Related Stats

As of the end of November 2002, the Food and Drug Administration reports the following *Vibrio vulnificus* statistics as relates to shellfish consumption:

Reported Cases: 21
Deaths: 12
Males/Deaths: 18/11
Females/Deaths: 3/1

States Involved: 9
Frequency April: 3
Frequency May: 5
Frequency June: 3
Frequency July: 5
Frequency August: 1
Frequency September: 2
Frequency October: 1
Frequency November: 1

For the most current

information on this topic contact Tom Herrington at 228-688-7941 or by email at: herrington.tom@epa.gov.



"The TxCWRP's commitment to success bodes well for the future of CWRP in the other Gulf states. "

Coastal America Update

Funding for Coastal America (CA) projects in Texas is about to receive a big boost. Duke Energy Gas Transmission and ENSR have aggressively taken the lead in organizing and recruiting partner corporations and amassing donations to the Texas Corporate Wetlands Restoration Partnership (TxCWRP) fund to help offset the costs of some Texas CA projects. The advent of the TxCWRP will be formally recognized

by local, regional and national CA partners during a ceremony early in 2003.

According to Bob Bosenberg, administrative co-chair for the CA Gulf Team, the TxCWRP's commitment to success bodes well for the future of CWRP in the other Gulf states.

Additionally in CA news, the residents and multiple community and governmental entities of

Sanibel Island, Fla., in partnership with the Fish & Wildlife Service's J. N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge, resulted in the removal of the invasive Brazilian pepper bush from several thousand acres. Their partnership-driven efforts received a 2002 Coastal America Partnership Award. Ms. Lynn Scarlet, Assistant Secretary of the Interior, officiated the awards ceremony.

Tampa Communications Committee Meeting

The Florida Aquarium in Tampa, Fla., hosted a late October meeting of the Communications Committee. A highlight of the meeting was a boat tour of Tampa Bay and a tour of the aquarium.

Gloria Car gave a presentation highlighting fiscal year 2002 funding broken down by state and by focus area. She pointed out that the Habitat Focus Team had exceeded their goals for fiscal year 2002.

Members approved updated annual performance goals for

fiscal year 2003 and discussed how to improve the approval process for video news releases. All agreed the VNRs were a useful tool and should be continued. VNRs from 2001 have run on Florida cable systems, government access and public education television.

Lee Yokel, from the Mobile Bay NEP, briefed the group on activities of the Mercury Project Team. She said the primary focus of the team was to develop standardized language for advisories. CC members felt that the GMP has an excellent opportunity to

take a leadership role on this issue since the Gulf public is expressing interest in the topic. Members suggested the Coastal Environmental Learning Centers be used as distribution points for educational material on this topic.

Furthering the One Gulf Campaign was another focus of the meeting, which included a creative writing session for One Gulf radio public service announcements. Other ideas included contacting the hotel/motel and restaurant associations for help, and looking into designing One Gulf placemats.



CC members enjoyed an after hours cruise of Tampa Bay courtesy of the Tampa Aquarium. Pictured here is Fantasy Island which also won a Gulf Guardian Award.

Citizens Advisory Committee Meets in Bay St. Louis, Miss.

A highlight of the Nov. 6-7 meeting of the Citizens Advisory Committee was approval of a resolution from the CAC to the Policy Review Board supporting Gulf of Mexico Program efforts to assist with the Louisiana wetland loss issue.

Melissa Manley of Battelle was introduced as the new project assistant to the CAC. Jennyfer Smith, also of Battelle, reported that the CAC web site has been updated.

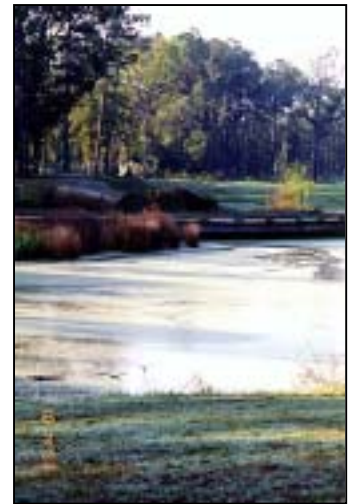
CAC members also received a presentation on the various impacts of jellyfish blooms on the

economy, fishing industry, and human health from Dr. Monty Graham. Blooms have increased worldwide, yet there seems to be great variability from year to year, making prediction more difficult. Dockwatch, which is partially funded through a grant from the Gulf of Mexico Program and supported by CAC volunteers, is crucial for jellyfish observations in the Gulf of Mexico.

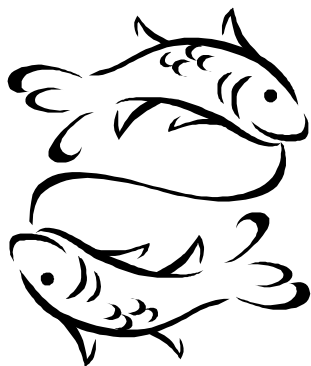
The CAC elected Brian Grantham as 2003 chair, Robert Crowe as vice chair, and Patty Caranna as secretary.

The group also received updates on the GMP from Deputy Director Bryon Griffith, and an update on efforts by the Gulf Restoration Network from Cynthia Sarthou.

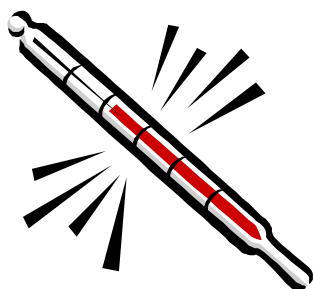
The meeting was held at the Bridges Golf Resort, a former Gulf Guardian award-winner, so a presentation of the environmentally friendly efforts of this 18-hole Palmer Signature Course was in order.



The Bridges Golf Course has 17 lakes and golfers sometimes confuse this environmentally friendly duck weed with algae. The ponds serve to filter the nutrients and other contaminants out of the water.



For more information on this topic, contact Dr. Fred Kopfler at 228-688-2712, or via email at: kopfler.fred@epa.gov



Consumption Advisories Workshop

In May, the GMP Management Committee charged the Gulf of Mexico Program to form a Project Team on Consumption Advisories for Mercury in Gulf Marine Fish. Dr. Fred Kopfler organized and recruited team members who then met in New Orleans Dec. 10-11.

The Team will evaluate all aspects of consumption advisories, identify areas of consistency and inconsistency, and develop consensus recommendations on appropriate ways to address inconsistencies. The Team is also expected to develop a model consumption advisory based on the recommendations and propose a public outreach plan for appropriately communicating mercury risks in Gulf seafood to the public, including effective means for disseminating the advisories to the public.

The team's objective is to develop recommendations

for consistent consumption advisories for mercury in all five Gulf states. At the December meeting, Ron Lukens introduced the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission Resolution on Methylmercury and Spencer Garrett introduced the National Marine Fisheries Service Synoptic Survey of Total Mercury in Recreational Finfish in the Gulf.

Annette Ashizawa gave an overview of human developmental stages, and timelines of susceptibility of various organs to developmental effects. Most major nervous system development has occurred by age three and half, and six years is considered the end of the critically susceptible period. Further developmental changes occur in the brains of adolescents. It is not known if this represents an additional period of susceptibility to mercury effects.

The team was also briefed

on consumption advisory processes for EPA, FDA and the five Gulf States and compared state king mackerel advisories. The group agreed that the current king mackerel advisories are very similar and that a common advisory is achievable if the parameters are harmonized.

Team members agreed that the adult weight should be 70kg, that meal size for fish in general should be eight ounces raw or six ounces cooked and that women of childbearing age are the sensitive subpopulation. They also agreed on king mackerel lengths – fork length should be used, no consumption for a fork length greater than 39 inches, and restricted consumption for a fork length between 33 and 39 inches.

The team is scheduling a conference call meeting in early February to review, among other agenda items, literature on developmental susceptibility of adolescents to define "age of children," and on potential cardiovascular effects of mercury.

Air Deposition Meeting

The first Gulf of Mexico Multi-Media Workshop: *Air Deposition in the Gulf of Mexico; Understanding the Impacts on Water Quality*, was held Oct. 10-11, in New Orleans, La. The aim of the workshop, co-sponsored by the Gulf of Mexico Program was to increase understanding of air deposition in Gulf watersheds and in the

Gulf of Mexico, the impacts to water quality and applications for total maximum daily load (TMDL) development.

Specific workshop goals were to: 1) Provide information on assessing and controlling air deposition; 2) Promote interaction among environmental professionals dealing with

air and water issues; and 3) Promote consideration of air deposition sources in the TMDL process.

According to participants, the workshop assisted in presenting a primer on air deposition and began the process of training state and federal employees on how to assess air deposition issues within the TMDL context.

Management Committee and Policy Review Board Meet

Management Committee

At its Oct. 8-9 meeting, the GMP Management Committee endorsed a revised draft of an Executive Order. Final recommended changes were incorporated and will be considered by the PRB in December. Other items discussed were the Alabama Mini-Strategic Assessment process, the Mercury Project Team Workplan, the Nutrient Pilot Study, development of a Lower Mississippi River Sub-Basin Committee, the Ad Hoc Recommendation on Focus Teams, **and a** review of the FY 2004 Workplan Project Status. The MC endorsed the Gulf

Program's participation in a Coastal America Coastal Wetland Restoration Project in Texas at the San Jacinto Battleground and the final publication of the *Research Needs Assessment*.

Policy Review Board

On Dec. 12, the GMP Policy Review Board met in New Orleans. Updates were presented on the progress of the Hazardous Algal Bloom Observing System (HABSOS) Pilot Project and the Mercury Fish Advisory Consistency Project Team. Informative presentations were given by Dr. Gene Whitney on the President's Interagency Workgroup on

Mercury, by Dr. R.D. Ellender on Bacterial Source Tracking Research, and by Ron Harrell on the Lower Mississippi Valley Initiative. The PRB requested that an addition be made to the Executive Order regarding a period of transition and would like to know the full approval process involved in the development of the Order before the final endorsement. It is expected that a final recommendation will be developed to be sent to EPA's Administrator in early 2003.

Habitat Focus Team Meets at Stennis Space Center

The Habitat FocusTeam met on Dec. 11 and 12 at Stennis Space Center, Miss., to begin the process of establishing two new Habitat Project Teams.

An existing Habitat project team is working on the Seagrass Status and Trends Report. The two new teams established were the Coastal Wetlands Status and Trends Report Team with USGS taking the lead, and the Habitat Restoration Team.

The Habitat Restoration Team, for which there were numerous volunteers, will develop a more succinct strategy for Gulf habitat restoration,

involving all of the Gulf Program partners to achieve habitat restoration goal of enhancing, restoring and protecting 20,000 acres of coastal marine habitat by 2009.

In addition to the project team formation, The Nature Conservancy presented their Gulfwings project. The overall intent of Gulfwings is to create a "blueprint" of scientifically selected priority stopover sites for migratory birds. These sites are also important to restore, enhance or protect other conservation targets, including species, natural communities and ecosystems. Strategies identified and employed to

address multi-site threats at these places will also help to achieve the Gulf of Mexico Program's goals.

Team members were also updated on Gulf of Mexico Program support to GEMS, through the NOAA Community-Based Restoration Grant program. For FY 2002, this grant program will support GEMS projects in nine GEMS areas along the Gulf Coast.

"One of the most beneficial outcomes of the meeting was an exchange session where GMP grant recipients presented their project information," said Diane Altzman, team co-chairman. "The team benefited from hearing about restoration efforts and habitat classification studies that are ongoing across the coast," she added.

For more information on Habitat Focus Team activities, contact Diane Altzman at 228-688-7015, or via email at: altsman.diane@epa.gov

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The *Gulf of Mexico Program Director's Report* is produced quarterly to highlight Gulf of Mexico Program activities and events.

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.epa.gov/gmpo

Calendar of Events

All dates are 2003, unless specified otherwise

Date	Event	Location
Feb. 10	MS River Sub Basin Committee Meeting Chateau Sonesta Hotel	New Orleans, LA
Feb. 12	LA FY 05 State Projects Meeting	Baton Rouge, LA
Feb. 13	MS FY 05 State Projects Meeting River House	Stennis Space Center, MS
Feb. 19-20	Nutrient Pilot Study in the Northern Gulf Kick-off Meeting, Waveland Holiday Inn	Waveland, MS
Feb. 24-25	FL FY 05 State Projects Meeting	Tallahassee, FL
Feb. 27	TX FY 05 State Projects Meeting	Austin, TX
March 26-27	GMP Management Committee Meeting	New Orleans, LA
April 15	Deadline for Submitting Gulf Guardian Award Applications	No location
Spring	Habitat Restoration Strategy Project Team Meeting Date and Place TBD	Not Determined
June	GMP Comprehensive Meeting	New Orleans, LA
Nov. 19 or 20	2003 Gulf Guardian Awards Ceremony in conjunction with the Clean Gulf Conf.	New Orleans, LA

About the Gulf of Mexico Program

The Gulf of Mexico Program is sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and is a non-regulatory, inclusive consortium of state and federal government agencies and representatives of the business and agricultural community, fishing industry, scientists, environmentalists, and community leaders from all five Gulf States. The Gulf Program seeks to improve the environmental health of the Gulf in concert with economic development.

2003 Gulf Guardian Awards Entries Now Being Accepted!

The Gulf of Mexico Program is currently accepting applications for the 2003 Gulf Guardian Awards. Applications are available on line at: www.epa.gov/gmpo/gulfguard.html. Once there, click on the entry form button and download the Microsoft Word entry form. When completed, the entry can be emailed to: Gulf.Guardian@epa.gov. The deadline for submitting an entry for the 2003 Gulf Guardian Awards is April 15, 2003. Awards will be presented at the Clean Gulf Conference scheduled for Nov. 19-20, 2003, in New Orleans, La.